



Conceptualising, practising and mobilising the feminist imaginary

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The aim of this workshop is to conceptualise, practise and mobilise the feminist imaginary. The interactive session will be convened by feminist adult educators from women's museums, libraries, higher education and working in various community settings. It will begin with six (5min) 'lightening talk' presentations to prompt small and large group discussions on 'the feminist imaginary' – how it might be conceived and how it might be mobilised to produce less hierarchical and unequal societies.

Context:

Gender discrimination is “the most enduring and defining inequality of our time” (Generation Equality Forum, 2021, n/p). The patriarchy has proved to be far more resilient than anyone suspected and there is new evidence of a rising global backlash of fundamentalist agendas (e.g., Shameen, 2021; Vintges, 2018). Extremism, cultural imperialism, ideological colonisation, a fervent vilification of “feminism as the primary threat to public morality” and the reimposition “of patriarchal heteronormative family values [are] shaping the parameters of public discourse and consciousness” (Shameen, 2021, p. 10). For Solnit (2014) the current state of the world represents a “a failure of the imagination” yet this faculty “is highly consequential because control over it is control over the future (p. 14). As Mohanty (2012) therefore reminds us, the imagination is “the most subversive thing a people can have” (p. ix).

Session outline:

The workshop will begin with short, visual examples of how the feminist imaginary is being practised in diverse locations and contexts. Rachel Thain-Gray will share diverse feminist education activities at the Glasgow Women's Library and Museum; Kerry Harman will re-present a 'Tea Party' organised by the East End Women's Museum; Darlene Clover will share a virtual exhibition that captured objects and stories of the feminist imaginary; Nicola Dickson will share her arts-based study with vulnerable women who are survivors of sexual abuse and homelessness; Sarah Williamson will introduce us to ArtActivistBarbie and her disruptive feminist interventions into art galleries; Susie Brigham will share a project in which young women living in Nova Scotia explored concepts and issues of social justice and social activism through participatory photography and storytelling methods. Following the short 'lightening talk' presentations, workshop participants will be provided with the opportunity to share and document the ways they conceive and practice the 'feminist imaginary' at small group tables (30 mins). Workshop participants will be asked to bring an object (or photograph of an object) to the workshop to prompt discussion on 'the feminist imaginary'. The objects and small group discussion will be shared at a larger group session and used to discuss and document how the feminist imaginary might be conceived and mobilised for broader political change (30 mins). The workshop documents (including objects, photographs, drawings and notes) will be displayed in a public space at the conference and used as a resource for ongoing collaborative research exploring the material effects of 'the feminist imaginary'.